

VZCZCXRO7120  
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA  
DE RUEHPC #0186/01 0651505  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 061505Z MAR 07  
FM AMEMBASSY LOME  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7823  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0532

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LOME 000186

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PARIS FOR GREG D'ELIA  
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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [TO](#)

SUBJECT: TOGO - ELECTORAL COMMISSION'S ACTIVITIES - 2007  
LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS PRIMER

REF: 2006 LOME 1115

¶1. Summary: Togo's National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) has made institutional and logistics progress in a number of key areas toward legislative elections, officially scheduled for June 24. However, many believe that implementation of the new election system and voting logistics will take longer than originally envisioned and will cause the CENI to push the elections to late August. The CENI needs technical and financial assistance from the EU and international donors to be able to organize technically robust elections. Previous cables focused on the politics surrounding the electoral process thus far; this message describes the nuts and bolts of the process as it has evolved and the key challenges remaining. End Summary

¶2. The CENI has been hard at work since January. Members attended a four-day seminar up-country during which they listened to advice from electoral experts from Benin, Burkina Faso, and Mali. The CENI debated the merits of voter registration cards with or without photo and delivery on the spot or after centralized production elsewhere. The CENI, after much heated discussion, adopted an on the spot voter card with photo. This is a break with the past practice of registering voters and then issuing a centrally produced non-photo voter card at a later date. The CENI's decision was confirmed during a meeting in Burkina Faso with Blaise Compaore, the facilitator of the Global Political Accord (GPA) signed last August. The CENI subsequently decided to borrow the electoral kits used in the UN-supervised presidential election recently held in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The kit is a mobile unit comprised of a generator, computer, scanner, digital camera connected to the computer, and software used by experts to identify each voter and deliver a card on the spot. At each voter registration location, a team of experts will welcome the voter, double check his/her identity, enter the ID data into the computer, take a digital picture of the voter, and scan his/her fingerprints. The card is produced and issued immediately.

¶3. On February 9, the Council of Ministers at their weekly Cabinet meeting ratified the CENI's decision to borrow electoral kits from the DRC. Members of the CENI and the Minister of Territorial Administration visited DRC from February 17 - 23 to negotiate the loan of about 2500 electoral kits to the GoT. They came back with two samples, and the balance of the kits is to be shipped soon.

¶4. On February 1, the National Assembly amended the Electoral Code, putting into effect the changes to the electoral system that were agreed in the Global Political Accord signed on August 20, 2006 by the major political parties and the GoT. The Assembly confirmed the new composition of the CENI and its duties to organize and monitor elections. The amended Electoral Code also establishes for the first time in Togo a party-list type of system for the legislative elections, such as is used in South Africa and the European Parliament inter alia. Previously, Togo had a two-stage election process, which was prone to violence in the run-up to the second stage. The CENI will need to learn how to administer a party-list representation system and then train the CELIs and the voting

officers.

¶5. On February 19, the CENI released the names of the 279 members who will comprise the 31 Local Independent Electoral Committees (CELI). As recommended in the GPA, each prefecture (the electoral constituencies in the upcoming elections) will be represented by nine members: two from the ruling RPT party, one from the GOT, one from each opposition party that took part in the national dialogue (UFC, CAR, CDPA, CPP and PDR) and a magistrate. The CELIs are charged with organizing and supervising elections in local constituencies and reporting results to the CENI. They also propose and then elect members for the executive boards (vice-president, reporter, and deputy reporter) of each local voting office and then supervise their activities. The magistrate is the president ex officio of the CELI.

¶6. Many tasks assigned to the CENI remain to be completed. The difficulty of these tasks makes political party leaders and much of civil society believe that the election is very likely to be postponed to a later date. Members of the CENI told the Embassy that it will take some time to train operators on the new, high-technology electoral kits before the registration and the issuance of voters cards itself will start. Testing the kits in the DRC before forwarding to Togo, re-testing upon arrival, and installing the software will take about six weeks. The CENI will then train trainers, who will in turn train the field workers. This process should take about two months.

¶7. Comment: The CENI will need technical and financial support from the EU and from other international donors to be able to organize credible elections. The June 24 election date was set by the GoT to satisfy certain EU requirements before any election assistance could be given and before many of the logistical details for the election

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were known. Despite the fact that certain politicians who do not favor the new electoral system are pressing for respecting the June 24 date for elections, the consensus in Togo seems to be that it is more important to take the extra time necessary to have well-organized elections. The stakes for Togo's relations with the international donor community are understood to be high, and most people do not want to rush into elections that might fail to be considered internationally acceptable. End Comment.

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